

Inspection of Newtown Community Primary School

Newtown Road, Carlisle, Cumbria CA2 7LW

Inspection dates: 14–15 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Although pupils enjoy attending the school, they do not achieve well. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not develop the knowledge that they need in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. The quality of pupils' education is inadequate. Until recent weeks, leaders' and staff's expectations of pupils have been too low.

Pupils behave well. In classrooms, they listen carefully to teachers and are eager to complete their activities. Pupils take great pride in their work. They are polite and well mannered. Most parents and carers have no concerns about pupils' behaviour at the school.

The pupils that we spoke to said that they enjoy their educational trips. They said that these help their learning. Leaders have developed a wide range of after-school clubs, such as multi-skills and 'phunky food'. Over time, leaders have prioritised these extra opportunities too much. This has been at the expense of making sure that pupils learn the subject knowledge that they need.

Pupils said that they feel safe and happy at the school. They told us that bullying rarely happens. If it does happen, they are confident that teachers will sort it out.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and governors have done too little to improve the work of the school since the previous inspection. The quality of education at the school has declined. Leaders and governors are entirely reliant on help from experts from outside the school to make the improvements that are urgently required. In recent weeks, the new acting leaders have worked tirelessly to address the shortcomings at the school. Even so, there is much to do to tackle the many deep-rooted weaknesses that remain.

Too few pupils can write or apply their mathematics knowledge sufficiently well in key stage 2. Pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment is poor. Senior leaders and governors have acted too slowly to improve their use of external funding to support disadvantaged pupils.

Until recently, leaders have not ensured that staff always follow and review plans to support individual pupils with SEND. As a result, this groups of pupils do not achieve well.

Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum sets out in enough detail what pupils should learn and when they should learn each unit of work. For example, in subjects such as geography and physical education (PE), pupils' learning from one year to the next is ad hoc. This means that pupils do not know and remember as much important information as they should.

Leaders have not ensured that all teachers follow the school's mathematics curriculum. Pupils have large and unnecessary gaps in their learning. Only one third of pupils attained the expected standard in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2019.

Until recently, reading has not been a high priority at the school. The new acting leaders have created an attractive library area to encourage pupils' love of reading. Leaders are grouping books together so that pupils can read books at the right level for their ability. Children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 are learning letter sounds adequately. However, staff across the school do not make sure that all pupils understand what they read. Staff do not follow a consistent and well-planned approach to the teaching of reading in key stage 2. This hampers pupils' ability to read for pleasure and for meaning.

Acting leaders are starting to provide subject leaders with effective training to help them to develop the curriculum. Subject leaders appreciate this support. They say that acting leaders are mindful of their workload and well-being.

Children settle quickly and behave sensibly in the early years. Staff mostly plan the early years curriculum well, including in reading and mathematics. Acting leaders are supporting staff to better adapt the curriculum to support children with SEND but it is too early to see the impact of this work. Children use their knowledge of letter sounds successfully in their reading and writing. They leave the Reception Year well prepared to continue their learning in Year 1.

Leaders and staff promote pupils' personal development well. Pupils understand words such as 'tolerance' and 'respect'. They have many opportunities to act responsibly and to help the work of the school. Pupils take part in many sports. Pupils are resilient and take good care of each other. Pupils know how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. They behave themselves in lessons and in other activities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make appropriate checks on all adults who work at the school. Staff are well trained in safeguarding. They are vigilant and know whom to tell if they have any concerns. Leaders record and follow up staff's concerns swiftly to keep pupils safe. The family learning mentor provides effective support to pupils with their well-being. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for instance when they use the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The current turbulence in leadership means that the school is completely reliant on acting leaders, including acting governors, to bring about urgent improvement.

This is not sustainable. Senior leaders and governors must strengthen leadership and governance in order to build capacity and successfully tackle the endemic weaknesses in the quality of education that pupils receive.

- The curriculum is not effective. Plans for the curriculum do not set out what staff should teach or when they should teach different units of work. As a result, pupils do not gain knowledge in a logical order. This hampers their achievement. This is especially true for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Acting leaders have started to identify the knowledge that staff need to teach in each subject. They must now ensure that these new plans are finalised, agreed and implemented consistently by teachers so that all pupils learn well in each subject.
- Subject leaders are only just beginning to understand their roles in the development of subjects. This makes it difficult for leaders to improve the curriculum. Senior leaders must ensure that subject leaders have the skills, knowledge and expertise to lead their subjects effectively. This will ensure that subject leaders are able to support teachers to deliver a high-quality curriculum that helps pupils to achieve.
- The curriculum does not enable disadvantaged pupils to achieve as well as they should. This group of pupils are ill-prepared for future success because they do not receive the support that they need. Leaders should ensure that external funding and the reviewed curriculum are used effectively to enable disadvantaged pupils to gain the knowledge and skills that they need in each curriculum subject.
- Leaders do not plan the curriculum for reading properly. This holds pupils back from understanding what they read and using their phonics skills to read information in a range of subjects. Leaders should plan and implement a rigorous and systematic approach to the teaching of reading throughout the school. This will mean that pupils read with accuracy, understanding and fluency by the time they leave Year 6.
- Staff do not always follow, review and refine their plans for individual pupils with SEND as much as they should. Pupils with SEND do not achieve well across the curriculum. Leaders should support staff, including those in the early years, to help pupils with SEND to learn the knowledge that they need across subjects.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	112218
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10121975
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	123
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Christine Weaving
Headteacher	Raymond Gordon
Website	www.newtown.cumbria.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	10–11 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- At the time of the inspection, substantive school leaders had been absent from the school since October 2019. The local authority had arranged support from a local school. An acting headteacher, curriculum leader and leader for SEND are working temporarily at the school.
- The governing body is currently being supported by a group of experienced governors. This joint governance committee is overseeing the work of the school.
- There has been a high turnover of teaching staff since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

- We spoke with the acting headteacher and with the temporary leaders for SEND and the curriculum.
- We spoke with a group of governors from the joint governance committee, including the chair of the governing body, and with two representatives of the local authority.
- We looked at a range of documentation about safeguarding. We met with the leader responsible for safeguarding to discuss how the school keeps pupils safe.
- We did deep dives in reading, mathematics, PE and geography. We spoke with staff who lead these subjects, most of whom are doing so on a temporary basis. We visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils about their learning and their experience of the school.
- We spoke with a group of teachers and teaching assistants. We considered the views of 13 members of staff who completed the Ofsted survey.
- We spoke with several parents at the start of the school day. We considered the views of 13 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Garry White, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gill Burrow

Ofsted Inspector

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